

THE BRANDON FUR TRADE.

Brandon is a little country town just on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, and standing out of the Fen district on some rolling uplands, to which it gives the proud title of the Brandon Heights. Its chief beauty lies in the river, the Little Ouse, which winds slowly in and out between grassy meadows, now covered with masses of golden buttercups and rich red sorrel, which brings several artists in summer to enjoy the richness of its colouring, and many fishermen to enjoy quiet days along its banks. It would be easy enough to pass through the quiet little town many times without knowing that quite an extensive industry is carried on giving employment to some 400 or 500 people; many motorists and cyclists must pass through without giving it a thought, and other travellers' attention would only perhaps be caught by seeing long poles of rabbit skins being carried along or women wheeling wheelbarrow loads to their homes. If inquiry were made, it would be found these skins were used in the Brandon fur trade, and it is this that I am going to try to describe.

For some time we had been wanting to know more about the industry, and this afternoon the owner of the largest factory kindly offered to show us round. Rabbits are caught from off the warrens all round here. Brandon has been famous for its rabbits for many generations, right back *at least* to the time of Hereward when, Kingsley tells us, "he came on his famous mare Swallow, from the Isle of Ely, through Soham, Fordham, and Mildenhall, on the way robbing a potter of his pots, and when nearing Brandon he pulled up, sorted his pots, kept the whole ones, and threw the shreds to the rabbits." So there must have been rabbits then, and I believe they were the lovely silver-grey ones, which now, alas! are extinct. However, a great number of rabbits are taken from round here, but a far larger quantity come from abroad, principally New Zealand and Australia. Skins of hares and one or two other small animals are also imported.

After the rabbit is skinned and dried the first process consists of pulling the larger hairs off, which is done by hand, and leaving just the best fur beneath. Women and girls do this chiefly; they take the skins to their homes and work away at them as long as it is light, being paid by the number of skins. We asked one old woman one day whom we often see working if the fluff did not get down her throat, and she said: "Well, it do at first, miss, but I never take no notice, and work with my window open, and it don't seem to do no 'arm." She certainly looked very bonny, and we noticed most of the workers seemed very healthy and not like the poor sallow-faced workers one so often sees among factory hands.

Next we were taken to the "carotting" room. "Carotting" is a local term used because here the chemicals applied to the skin turn it a light yellow. Each man stands at a kind of sink holding the skin in one hand and a hard bristling brush in the other; this latter he dips into a chemical solution and then vigorously brushes the skin. He wears gloves to prevent the chemical burning his hand; this process makes the fur bind better for "felt." They are then packed up in bundles and put on racks to dry, where the chemical still goes on doing its work; the longer they dry the better; generally it is about three months. The heat of the drying-room is sometimes over 140°—worse than a stoke-hole in the Red Sea!!! So far everything has been done by hand; now the machinery begins to aid the workers. First the skins are put through two rollers to press them and bring out any remaining dirt, then they are passed on to a most extraordinary machine. The skin is fixed under a roller with curious sharp-edged teeth, which draw it along and in a wonderful manner slice off the fur from the skin. The fur comes out looking just as it did before, only without a skin underneath, but the skin is all torn up to threads to be thrown out and used for making gum and size—and who knows, perhaps gelatine!!

Men look after the machinery and boys carry the fur on trays into the sorting-rooms, where they are set before more

girls and women, who as quickly as can be pick out any little impurities or discolourations that remain, gather up the remains of poor bunnies in a little furry ball, and put them in large brown paper bags. About 120 skins, or rather "furs," go into a bag, and are then tied up and stored in a cool room (this is necessary on account of moths) ready to be sent up to the HAT factories. In my ignorance I had no idea till this afternoon that it is not the skin at all, but only these little balls of fur, that go to make up the "felt hats." The quality and expense of the hat simply goes by the condition of the fur; and of these we saw seven different grades.

—JOSEPHINE WILKINSON.

NOTICES.

MARRIAGES.

PRINGLE-FISCHER.—On March 29th, at St. James Church, Dollar, N.B., by the Rev. William Gwyther and the Very Rev. Provost Grubb, Arthur Stanley Pringle, Advocate, Edinburgh, to Ida Emilie, daughter of Morten Fischer, Esq., J.P., of Elmbank, Dollar.

CLIFFORD-CLARK.—On Wednesday, July 14th, 1909, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Rev. John James, M.A., Stanley Clifford, of Laleham, to Olive Alkelda, youngest daughter of the late Charles Clark and Mrs. Clark, of Lee.

TOVEY-CONDER.—On October 19th, at Trimulgherry, India, Captain George Strangways Tovey, Royal Field Artillery, to Lilian Mary, youngest daughter of the late Rev. Alfred Conder, of Bognor.

LIST OF SECOND-HAND BOOKS.

49. "First Latin Book." By Scott and Jones. 9d.
50. "Ambleside Geography." By Miss Mason. Book IV. 9d.
51. "This World of Ours." By Arnold Forster. 1s.
52. "Laws of Every-day Life." By Arnold Forster (quite new). 1s.
53. "Industries of Animals." By F. Houssay. 2s. 6d.

58. "As you like it." Blackie. 3d.
59. "Ling's Swedish Drill."
60. "Plutarch's Lives: Dion, Brutus, Artaxerxes, etc."

4d.

In future will any students having books to dispose of secondhand, send them to me? Otherwise a purchaser of many books has several postages to pay before receiving them.

Miss Thorp, c/o Lady Forbes Adam, Mere Old Hall, Knutsford, wishes to know of anyone who can supply her with specimens of flint, limestone, and selenite crystals. She could send specimens of granite, marl, and rock salt.

G. M. BERNAU, Sid Court, Redhill.

STUDENTS' MEETINGS.

There were eight of us at the meeting on Saturday, November 5th, at 13, Chilworth Street—a larger number than we have had for some time. As it was half-term, neither Miss Faunce nor Miss Evans were present, but Miss Goode and Miss Clendinnen were there (thanks to the half-term), so we were gainers as well as losers. Talk chiefly centred round the coming Conference at Ambleside, and we are beginning to wonder what will be the subjects chosen for papers and for discussion. Those present: Misses Kitching, Bernau, Franklin, Davis, Owen, Goode, Clendinnen, and Gray.

A meeting of the Manchester Branch was held on September 14th (Wednesday), at St. Luke's Rectory, Cheetham Hill. The attendance was small, G. T. Bradford (the hostess), M. M. Parsons, and A. Thorp only being present. Nothing of great importance was discussed, although those who had not been to the London Conference enjoyed having "first hand" news of it.

The question was raised as to the possibility of continuing the branch, and it was decided to do so; but it is to be hoped that there will be larger meetings in the coming year. The secretary's postal expenses for the year—September, 1909—

September, 1910—divided amongst twelve students, came to 2d. each.

Any ex-students who are able to attend Manchester meetings and do not receive notices of them are asked to communicate with the secretary, Olive Thorp, Dobroyd, Todmorden.

A meeting of the Manchester Branch was held on Saturday, October 22nd, at Messrs. Duncan and Foster's Tea Rooms, Mount Street, Manchester. There were present: G. Flewker, M. M. Parsons, E. H. Smeeton, O. Thorp, and R. Benyon-Winsor. There was some discussion with regard to papers to be read at the Conference, and it was decided to send the suggestions to the S.E.C.

Two students reported that they had found it impossible to read "Heroes of Asgard" and "Tanglewood Tales" to their pupils, who were so imaginative that the tales got on to their nerves and that they lent terrors to the darkness. Have other students come across this difficulty? If they have the Manchester students would be glad to hear of books that they have used as an alternative. One student suggested that there might be an alternative on the programme.

The next termly meeting in Manchester will be on November 26th, Saturday (*probably* at Messrs. Duncan and Foster's Tea Rooms, 10, Mount Street, at 3.30 p.m.), and the next holiday meeting will be held on January 3rd, 1911, if possible. Postcards will be sent out to members in the usual way before each meeting.

—OLIVE THORP, *Secretary*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Scale How, Ambleside,

October 31st, 1910.

DEAR EDITOR,

Several letters about scouting and the way in which it is to be carried, especially in small families, have come to me. May I take up a little space in explaining how we think the scheme should be organised?

We at Scale How, students and school children, form a troop of scouts called the Peewits. When a governess begins

scouting in her post, she has a *patrol*, and this patrol chooses a name for itself. When there is only one child, she or he should be an *independent scout*, having a badge, etc., just as one of a patrol. The governess is *Scout Mistress*, and as such has the management of scouting expeditions, arranges the tests for Tassel Honours, (if those which we have drawn up are unsuitable—see September "Parents' Review,") and is also judge in the tests.

There may, of course, be instances in which the governess herself wishes to be a scout, and to form a patrol with her pupil. In such cases it would be necessary to find someone who would take the place of Scout Mistress, at least so far as the judging of tests is concerned. The parents, or others interested, might do this, deciding at the demonstration whether the scout is worthy of the tassels aimed at.

When possible two or more patrols within reach of each other should combine to form a troop. The patrols, of course, keep their own name, and the troop will have a number. The Peewits are Troop I. As soon as another troop has been formed, notice should be sent to us, and the new troop will be enrolled. A troop may consist of any number of patrols, but should not be allowed to grow to unmanageable size. Patrols and troops must be entirely self-working. That is to say, tests, badges, etc., are under the final judgment of the Scout Mistress. So that there may be, however, a connection between us all, we should like new patrols to let us know of their existence, and also to let us have a description or painted copy of their badge. A short report of the work of the patrol at the end of each term, or even once in the year, would be most interesting. The reports would be read at our demonstration, and a summary of them might be printed in the *Pianta*—if the Editor will allow. In that way we might get many hints, and also give a few.

Does this scheme meet with the approval of those who have tried scouting in their posts? We shall welcome any suggestions.

Believe me, very sincerely yours,
JESSIE H. SMITH.

Scale How,

October 31st, 1910.

DEAR EDITOR,

Although it is not very long since we last wrote, we cannot let a number of the *Pianta* pass without giving you some news of Scale How.

We are having a lovely autumn. It is so warm that many of the late summer flowers are still out and the tints are beautiful. In spite of the fact that we have had several gales, which have torn up the trees, most of them still keep their leaves. The squirrels seem very numerous this autumn, and we have seen an unusual number of partridges.

Miss Parish was with us for a few days at the beginning of the term. We all enjoyed her visit very much.

The first drawing-room evening was given by Miss Orr on "Watts," and a large number of his pictures were passed round. She brought out very clearly the characteristics of his style in several of his pictures. She drew her information chiefly from "G. F. Watts," by J. E. Phythian (?).

During Mr. Oscar Browning's visit, of which a full description is given elsewhere, Miss Lobjoit read us a very interesting account of ancient Egypt. Much of her local colouring was taken from "Joseph the Dreamer," by Robert Bird.

The next week Miss Channing Pearce gave us a paper on Canterbury, with which town she is personally acquainted. She dwelt much on the charm of the cathedral, and on the many legends attached to this quaint old town, so that all those who have not yet done so hope to visit it soon.

We are attending a course of most interesting lectures on Architecture, given by Mr. Stoughton Holborn, who has lectured here before with great success, on "Robert Browning." The chief points of each lecture are illustrated at the end by excellent lantern slides, many of them photographs taken by the lecturer himself. He has written a most fascinating book on this subject: "An Introduction to the Architectures of European Religions" (Publishers, Messrs. T. and T. Clark, 38, George Street, Edinburgh), which those interested in architecture will find most useful.

We held our Hallow E'en festivities on Saturday evening, October 29th. The Juniors were invited to be in the classroom by 6 p.m., disguised with masks and headdresses, which were so good that it was hardly possible to recognise anyone. After unmasking we played all sorts of games; amongst others, ducking for apples, biting pieces off sticky buns hung on strings, fighting with pillows, when sitting balanced on a pole with the feet off the ground, a frog race, in which each competitor has a cardboard frog with a string threaded through a hole in the middle, one end of which was tied to the fender the other end was held in the hand and jerked gently to make the frog move along. This was a very popular game. The classroom was lighted to imitate sun, moon, and stars (by coloured papers in front of the lights). After some dancing we had supper in St. George's, all sitting on the floor in gipsy fashion. Dancing finished the evening, and we went to bed tired out.

We have had no debates so far this term, but one Saturday evening we had a reading of Rudyard Kipling. Time did not permit us to read nearly as much as we had intended. We hope to have some debates later on.

The Senior's time at Scale How is drawing to a close, and although we are looking forward with pleasure to taking up our new duties after Christmas, we shall always look back on our training here as a time full of pleasure and interest to us all.

—From THE PRESENT STUDENTS.

A SUMMER SCHOOL OF HANDICRAFTS.

As other old students may have thought of taking lessons in handicrafts during the holidays, it may interest them to hear a short account of the Scarborough Summer Course, which two of us attended this year.

The Scarborough School is the largest of the half-dozen Summer Schools now conducted in various parts of Britain, was attended this year by over 240 students, and has such a reputation that its Principal was invited to describe its workings before the educational section of the British Association.

His lecture was illustrated by innumerable models made this year in the various classes, for a complete account of which see the prospectus. To mention those most interesting to House of Education students, clay modelling and cardboard modelling are among the most popular. Repoussé and wood carving are also taught on educational lines.

The course, held for four weeks in the handsome and most convenient building of the Scarborough Municipal School, is well named a school. We attended six hours one day and four the next, which allows for three half-holidays a week, and had to answer the roll call three times a day; the number of attendances being apparently a point on which the existence of the school depends. Those who go in for the examinations do have to work very hard, but after all it is only for a month, and it is quite usual to attend the classes and do a great part of the work without taking an examination at the end. The fees are only £3 3s., but living is expensive in Scarborough during the season. It cost two of us about 35s. a week each, though the students in the hostels paid only 26s. But we preferred to be quiet and comfortable in lodgings.

With a brief quarter of an hour's break in the middle of the morning, there was little opportunity for making acquaintances except among the members of one's own classes. This made the social evenings all the more welcome—evenings when everybody met to enjoy concerts and dancing in the spacious school hall, the music being of a distinctly high order. The students also organised half-holiday expeditions to neighbouring places, like Whitby, but in these we did not join.

Though I was in a manner forced to take this course, since trainers of teachers are bound now to hold the higher certificate in the subject they teach, I found nothing to regret in spending part of the holidays thus. It has been an immense gain to see the methods and work of others, to get new ideas in such a time-honoured subject as cardboard modelling, and also to compare the many and various educational theories current in the school world with those which we have learnt to revere.

—A. C. DRURY.

HANDICRAFTS.

In brasswork we are only making such things as can be made up in our own workshop.

To begin with, each student has made a small circular plate, in copper or brass, with an initial in the centre. This gives practice in tracing and punching. Round and square trays requiring true repoussé work are next to be made.

BOOKS ADDED TO THE LIBRARY.

History.

"Introductory History of England." Fletcher. 4 vols.
(1) To 1485; (2) 1485-1660; (3) 1660-1792; (4) 1792-1815.

"Dictionary of English History." Sydney Lowe and E. Pullen.

Essays.

"Charity and Social Life." Loch.

"Home Life in England." Paget.

Geography and Travel.

"A Lady's Life in the Rockies." Bird.

"Western Women in Eastern Lands." Montgomery.

Bible Teaching.

"Old Testament History." Vols. I., II., III., IV.
Hardwick.

"Sinai and Palestine" (Everyman's Library). Stanley.

"Old Testament History and Literature." Alford.

"Bible Commentary." One vol. Dummellou.

Nature Study.

"How to know the Trees." Henry Irving. 3s. 6d. net.
Cassell.

Biography.

"Some Famous Women." Louise Creighton. Longmans
Green and Co.

BOOK LIST.

"The Rise of the Greek Epic." Gilbert Murray. This is a most fascinating study of the Greek life and customs as depicted in Homer. It is full of delightful and interesting